capacity, damage or deterioration of quality of foodgrains stored in the open pilferage during storage and movement, wrong weighment in connivance with the officials and payment of exorbitant rates for supply of material. Last year Rs. 22 crores of rupees were drained off from Punjab alone because the price paid for wooden crates was two-and-a-half times higher than that paid in 1984. I would like to know as to what steps have been taken to check ths losses on these accounts.

SHRI AJIT PANJA: Various steps have been taken. The main problem is that if there is no adequate storage capacity covered, then the losses take place, as also in transit, Sir. Steps have been taken. The first one is that we are releasing as much possible through covered railway wagons so that the loss in that respect is not there. So far as the administrative portion is concerned, steps have been taken, and whenever any complaint comes to notice immediate steps are taken. Thirdly, the States have been directed to have surprise checkes in respect of their arrears so that the difficulties could be minimised.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Next question:182.

Purchase of jute by West Bengal Government

*182. SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Central Government have decided to permit monopoly procurement of juts by the Government of West Bengal; and

(b) if so, how much money was offered by the Central Government for this purpose?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF TEXTILES (SHRI KHURSHID ALAM KHAN): (a) No such propsal has been received from the State Government of West Bengal.

(b) Does not arise.

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: Mr. Chairman, Sir, in view of the fact that there had been a crash of raw jute prices last year and distress sale took place on a mass scale and purchase by the Jute Corporation of India could not hold the market price at the stationary levels, and in view of the fact that the present market price of raw jute this year con inues to be Rs. 210 to Rs. 215 per quintal, that is, about Rs. 70 below the statutory price, what steps the hon. Minister has considered o protect the intrests of jute growers in this regard and whether the Government is considering the question of monopoly procurement of raw jute, either by the Centre or the States and make the purchase of raw jute by the industry from the Government agency compulsory? Is Central Government ready to advance money for this to the States.

SHRI KHURSHID ALAM KHAN: Sir, this year we have purchased over 27 lakhs of bales of raw jute, and this is the highest ever purchase made, and the purchase is still continuing. The total production is estimated between 95 and 107 lakhs of bales. Unfortunately, there has always been an erratic production in jute. That creates all the problem. Our estimate is that if the production is at the level of 70 to 75 lakh bales then there will be no distress sale. If there is a distress sale, Sir, we have ensured that the minimum support price comes into operation wherever price start falling in the market. The centres have been opened by the J.C.I. as well as the cooperative centres for making these purchases. As regards the monopoly procurement, as I have already said, the Central Government has no intention of entering into monopoly procurement. And it is a very massive operation which has to be done and if the State Governments are interested and if they consider themselves to be well equiped for monopoly procurement, they might consider this question.

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: While contesting the statement made by the honourable Minister I only produce a press clipping saying, "Jute prices crash, distress sales by small farmers". Therefore, whatever might have been the procurement and purchase by the JCI that has been loudly announced, there has been a distress sale of raw jute on a mass scale

appeared in the recent issue of "Rapi- ply of inferior quality

throughout the country and Government has failed miserably to protect the interests of 40 lakh jute workers. Therefore, the question is we are not interested in listening to how much they have purchased but we are interested in knowing what steps the Government proposes to take this year also the distress sale does not take place as has happened last year.

SHRI KHURSHID ALAM KHAN: We will ensure that procurement of raw jute is done according to the prices announced by the Agriculture Ministry and all the centres are well equipped to start purchases as soon as juts starts arriving in the market..

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is there any distress sale by the small farmers?

SHRI KHURSHID ALAM KHAN: We have made announcements over the radio, the television and through the local media that nobody should make distress sale of the comodity because we are there to purchase all that jute which is brought to the centres by the producers and not the middlemen.

SHRI SUKOMAL SEN: Everybody will agree that jute industry is in deep crisis. Now the Minister said that the JCI is not going to undertake monopoly purchase of raw jute and he added that if the States want, they can do it at their level. Now the industry is in such a crisis where not only is production of raw jute and its export affected by the policy of the Government now they are also importing synthetic fibre and that is also competing with jute. Now, considering all these aspects of the crisis in jute industry, I would like to know whether the Government is now at least prepared to consider the demands put forward by various quarters including the Legislative Assembly of West Bengal and various concerned organisations for nationalisation of jute industry, including raw jute trade. The Minister said the States may undertake monopoly purchase of raw jute, pending nationalisation, if the States support monopoly procurement. In that case, will the Government of India provide the necessary advance to the States so that they can build up administrative apparatus and infrastructure for monopoly purchase of raw jute?

MR. CHAIRMAN: He has said already Government has no such intention. What is the use of repeating the point?

SHRI KHURSHID ALAM KHAN: I entirely agree with the honourable Member that the synthetics are replacing the jute and it is also a fact that 80 per cent of the synthetic material is imported. Therefore, we have taken it up with the Industry Ministry that this synthetic production should be controlled in such a fashion that it does not damage the jute industry. But at the time I would certainly like to assure the honourable Member that the Central Government has no intention of providing any monetary support to State Governments or procurement of jute on a monopoly basis.

श्री सत्य प्रकाश मालवीय : मान्यवर, मैं यह जानना चाहता हूं कि क्या जूट उत्पादकों को उनके उत्पादन मूल्य के अनुसार मूल्य नहीं मिल रहा है ? . . . (व्यवधान)

SHRI KHURSHID ALAM KHAN: We have made it very clear on more than one occasion that we have no intention of nationalising the jute industry.

National Consumer Cooperative Federation

*183. SHRI SUSHIL CHAND MOHUNTA :

SHRI S. W. DHABE:†

Will the Minister of FOOD AND CIVIL SUPPLIES be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn towards reports of corruption against National Consumer Cooperative Federation that ap-

†The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri S. W. Dhabe.